

## *Community Preservation Act*

### **Land Acquisition Group Presents Final Report**

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

Will next year's town meeting be asked to endorse Duxbury's participation in the Community Preservation Act, a new state program that creates a property tax surcharge to fund open space?

There is no definitive answer to this question, but the selectmen this week asked members

of the land acquisition task force to stay together in order to bring their goals to fruition. This volunteer group was charged in May with researching ways to finance open space purchases. It presented its final report to selectmen this week.

The task force recommends that Duxbury adopt the Com-

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munity Preservation Act in order to finance the acquisition of 30 percent of the town's undeveloped land, or 1,500 acres, over the next 20 years.

Signed into law by the governor in September, the Community Preservation Act allows towns to approve up to a three percent surcharge on property taxes over Proposition 2 1/2. Town meeting must adopt the CPA. Of the money raised, 10 percent must be used to purchase open space, another 10 percent to create affordable housing, and another 10 percent spent on historical preservation. The remaining 70 percent can be spent by the town within those three categories. The surcharge rate can be adjusted annually. The Community Preservation Act also includes matching state funds and must be adopted for a minimum of five years.

The task force wants Duxbury to approve a three percent surcharge to raise \$9 million over 20 years, or \$750,000 a year. This is a cost of \$130 per family per year based on the 2000 median home price of \$319,800, according to the report. Another \$6 million is expected to come from the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts. The total \$15 million in Duxbury's land bank should be enough to meet the goals the committee set out for managing growth — preserving 30 percent of unused land for open space.

In formulating its report, the task force reviewed the town's open space needs in the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, the open space plan and the town wide survey, and then researched how other communities, such as Harvard, Martha's Vineyard, Marion, Franklin, Cape Cod and Nantucket financed their open space purchases.

The task force also realized the town had never defined how much land it wanted to preserve, and only bought open space "in fits and starts" over the last 30 years. According to Hines, of the 15,455 acres in

Duxbury, 5,889 acres are developed, 4,200 are open space and 5,366 acres remain unused. Proposed build-out information indicates the town could see an 80 percent increase in population, from 15,000 to 27,000 people, if all the developable land in town is used.

In presenting the report to selectmen, task force chairman David Hines said: "We see a conflict in where the town is going and what the goals are." According to the Comprehensive Plan, the town wants to preserve its semi-rural character, but it's under heavy development pressures. Setting aside three out of ten acres should allow for balanced growth, according to the task force's report.

"We have delivered to you what we feel is a reasonable goal," Hines said. "We feel the CPA is the best vehicle to accomplish the goal."

Selectmen did not overtly commit their support to the Community Preservation Act, however, they expressed an interest in seeing adoption of the law move forward.

"This is a huge beginning to have all this information in this

report," said Selectmen Chairman Margaret Kearney.

However, she cautioned: "This could die on the vine if it isn't picked up and carried through to town meeting."

"It will require a group that has an interest in seeing it pass," said Selectman John Tuffy, who called the Community Preservation Act "a different kind of financing tool."

The task force's report includes the research behind the recommendations, including information regarding other communities' processes to procure open space, how public and private entities work together to buy land, goal setting, financing models and recommendations. It also includes a section of the Comprehensive Report, the Open Space report, the town wide survey, community case studies, and the text of the Community Preservation Act.

The is a public document available at the Duxbury Free Library. Copies will be available for sale at a public meeting held by the land acquisition task force Thursday at 7:30 pm in the Merry Room at the library.